

C L A I M S

What is claimed is:

- 1     1.     A method of escalating non-realtime communications in a contact center, the method  
2         comprising:  
3             a.     extracting an aged communication from a plurality of shared file folders, wherein  
4                     the plurality of shared file folders are configured in a central processing area of  
5                     the contact center, and further wherein a communication is designated as aged  
6                     based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;  
7             b.     routing the aged communication with an escalation service to an immediate  
8                     workflow such that the aged communication is routed by the immediate workflow  
9                     for immediate response to a first designated agent;  
10            c.     presenting the aged communication to the first designated agent such that the aged  
11                    communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated agent; and  
12            d.     responding to the aged communication, wherein the first designated agent answers  
13                    the aged communication on the desktop,  
14            wherein the escalation service escalates an immediate communication to the immediate  
15            workflow for routing to the first designated agent.
- 1     2.     The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator, further  
2         wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged communication in  
3         the plurality of shared file folders.
- 1     3.     The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the communication is designated as immediate  
2         based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria before the communication becomes  
3         aged.
- 1     4.     The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the escalation service checks a present  
2         threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and delays escalating the  
3         communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is  
4         below the threshold.

- 1     5.     The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising monitoring the aged  
2           communication displayed on the first designated agent's desktop, wherein when the first  
3           designated agent does not answer the aged communication, the immediate workflow  
4           routes the aged communication to a second designated agent.
- 1     6.     The method as claimed in claim 5 further comprising sending an acknowledgment  
2           message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.
- 1     7.     The method as claimed in claim 5 further comprising prompting the first designated agent  
2           when the step of responding does not occur within a predetermined timeout period after  
3           the step of presenting.
- 1     8.     The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2           second designated agent after the prompting step is unanswered by the first designated  
3           agent.
- 1     9.     The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2           second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the prompting step by  
3           declining to respond to the aged communication.
- 1     10.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the set of predetermined escalation criteria are  
2           variable such that the set of predetermined escalation criteria will change during the  
3           responding step.
- 1     11.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first and second designated agents may  
2           select non-realtime communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not  
3           designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to  
4           those non-realtime communications not designated as aged.
- 1     12.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of  
2           predetermined designation criteria.

- 1     13.     A system for escalating non-realtime communications in a contact center, the system  
2             comprising:  
3             a.     means for extracting an aged communication from a plurality of shared file  
4                   folders, wherein the plurality of shared file folders is configured in a central  
5                   processing area of the contact center, and further wherein a communication is  
6                   designated as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;  
7             b.     means for routing the aged communication with an escalation service to an  
8                   immediate workflow such that the aged communication is routed by the  
9                   immediate workflow for immediate response to a first designated agent;  
10            c.     means for presenting the aged communication to the first designated agent such  
11                   that the aged communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated  
12                   agent; and  
13            d.     means for responding to the aged communication, wherein the first designated  
14                   agent answers the aged communication on the desktop,  
15            wherein the escalation service escalates an immediate communication to the immediate  
16            workflow for routing to the first designated agent.
- 1     14.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator,  
2             further wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged  
3             communication in the plurality of shared file folders.
- 1     15.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the communication is designated as  
2             immediate based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria.
- 1     16.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the escalation service checks a present  
2             threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and delays escalating the  
3             communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is  
4             below the threshold.
- 1     17.     The system as claimed in claim 13 further comprising means for monitoring the aged  
2             communication displayed on the first designated agent's desktop, wherein when the first  
3             designated agent does not answer the aged communication, the immediate workflow  
4             routes the aged communication to a second designated agent.

- 1     18.     The system as claimed in claim 17 further comprising means for sending an  
2                   acknowledgment message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.
- 1     19.     The system as claimed in claim 17 further comprising means for prompting the first  
2                   designated agent when the means for responding are not activated within a predetermined  
3                   timeout period after the means for presenting displays the aged communication on the  
4                   desktop of the first designated agent.
- 1     20.     The system as claimed in claim 19 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2                   second designated agent after the means for prompting is unanswered by the first  
3                   designated agent.
- 1     21.     The system as claimed in claim 19 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2                   second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the means for prompting  
3                   by declining to respond to the aged communication.
- 1     22.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the set of predetermined escalation criteria are  
2                   variable such that the set of predetermined escalation criteria will change when the means  
3                   for responding are activated.
- 1     23.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the first and second designated agents may  
2                   select non-realtime communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not  
3                   designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to  
4                   those non-realtime communications not designated as aged.
- 1     24.     The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of  
2                   predetermined designation criteria.
- 1     25.     A system of escalating a non-realtime communication in a contact center, comprising:  
2                   a.        a plurality of shared file folders where the non-realtime communication is  
3                   received and stored, wherein the plurality of shared file folders are configured in a  
4                   central processing area of the contact center, and further wherein an aged

5           communication is extracted from the plurality of shared file folders based on a set  
6           of predetermined escalation criteria;  
7           b.       an escalation service coupled with the plurality of shared file folders such that the  
8           escalation service routes the aged communication to an immediate workflow; and  
9           c.       a plurality of designated agents such that the aged communication is displayed on  
10          a desktop of a first designated agent after receiving the aged communication from  
11          the immediate workflow,  
12          wherein the first designated agent provides an immediate response to the aged  
13          communication on the desktop, and further wherein the escalation service escalates an immediate  
14          communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent.

1       26.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator,  
2               further wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged  
3               communication in the plurality of shared file folders.

1       27.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the communication is designated as  
2               immediate based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria before the communication  
3               becomes aged.

1       28.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the escalation service checks a present  
2               threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and delays escalating the  
3               communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is  
4               below the threshold.

1       29.     The system as claimed in claim 25 further comprising a second designated agent, wherein  
2               when the first designated agent does not answer the aged communication, the immediate  
3               workflow routes the aged communication to the second designated agent.

1       30.     The system as claimed in claim 29 further comprising sending an acknowledgment  
2               message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.

1       31.     The system as claimed in claim 29 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2               second designated agent after the first designated agent does not answer the prompt.

- 1     32.     The system as claimed in claim 29 wherein the aged communication is routed to the  
2                   second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the prompt by declining  
3                   to respond to the aged communication.
- 1     33.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the first designated agent is prompted when  
2                   the first designated agent does not respond within a predetermined timeout period after  
3                   the aged communication is displayed on the desktop.
- 1     34.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the set of predetermined escalation criteria are  
2                   variable such that the set of predetermined escalation criteria will change while the first  
3                   designated agent responds to the aged communication.
- 1     35.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the first and second designated agents may  
2                   select non-realtime communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not  
3                   designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to  
4                   those non-realtime communications not designated as aged.
- 1     36.     The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of  
2                   predetermined designation criteria.
- 1     37.     An apparatus for escalating non-realtime communications in a contact center, comprising:  
2                   a.     a storage media for storing a computer application;  
3                   b.     a processing unit coupled to the storage media; and  
4                   c.     a user interface coupled to the processing unit such that a plurality of users can  
5                   receive an aged communication from an immediate workflow through an  
6                   escalation service, wherein the plurality of users can provide an immediate  
7                   response to the aged communication, and further wherein the immediate  
8                   workflow can receive an immediate communication from the escalation service  
9                   for routing to the plurality of users.